



1998–99 CATS ASSESSMENT

Open-Response Item Scoring Worksheet

Grade 8—Social Studies

The **academic expectation** addressed by “Mass Media” is

2.16 Students observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, social groupings, and institutions to better understand people and the relationships among individuals and among groups.

The **core content** assessed by this item includes

- Language, music, art, dress, food, stories, and folktales help define culture.

Mass Media

In our society today, the mass media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies) influence the thinking of many Americans. Discuss how the media influence public opinion in America. In your discussion include one positive **and** one negative way the media impact public opinion.



SCORING GUIDE

Grade 8 Social Studies

Score	Description
4	Student fully discusses the media's influence and clearly explains one positive and one negative way that the media impacts public opinion in America. Explanation is detailed and relevant. Response shows a clear understanding of the impact of the media on our society.
3	Student generally discusses the media's influence and explains one positive and one negative way that the media impacts public opinion in America. Explanation is relevant. Response shows a general understanding of the impact of the media on our society.
2	Student provides a limited discussion of the media's influence and explains one positive and one negative way that the media impacts public opinion in America. Explanation may be unclear or partially irrelevant. OR Student discusses the media's influence and generally explains one positive OR one negative way that the media impacts public opinion in America. Explanation is relevant. Response shows a limited understanding of the impact of the media on our society.
1	Student's response is minimal (e.g., student minimally discusses one positive or one negative impact; student identifies a positive or negative impact or both but offers no discussion).
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

Examples of media functions:

- advertisements
- commercials
- cartoons
- news
- entertainment (TV or movies)
- weather



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 8 Social Studies

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

The mass media have a great effect on public opinion in both positive and negative ways.

One negative way is that by lying to persuade people to buy a product or promote an idea, or even a person. Television commercials, for example, tend to have false advertisements of products to convince people to buy a product even if it really isn't good. Because of this, people often quickly decide whether a person or product is good or bad before they know the actual facts.

On the positive side, the media make people understand more about serious topics such as diseases. The news is an example of bringing awareness to people about serious topics, and people know that it is the truth. This helps people make better decisions every day by giving us knowledge of what's going on. Being a teenager, the media help me by reporting on things such as peer pressure, drugs, and alcohol. By giving myself and other teenagers more information, we are able to choose more carefully and know which things are bad for us.

← Student discusses negative impacts of the media on public opinion (i.e., lying to persuade people to buy a product or promote an idea, or even a person).

← The discussion of negative impacts includes relevant examples and details (i.e., false or misleading television commercials).

← Student discusses positive impacts of the media on public opinion (i.e., increasing public awareness and helping make better decisions).

← Relevant examples and personal experience support the discussion of positive impacts (i.e., media coverage of teen issues).

Overall, the student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the ways that social institutions influence behavior. Specifically, the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the impact of the media on individuals and society.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 8 Social Studies

Sample 4-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

In our society today, the mass media (television, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies) influence the thinking of many Americans. People always believe what they hear on television or radio or what they see in newspapers and magazines.

Sometimes this can be positive, like if a person watches the news or if they see a commercial that has a message to stay in school, or one that says don't do drugs.

I believe that the mass media has more negative influences on public opinion. When violence is shown in the media, it often encourages youth to want to be like the violent people shown on TV or in the movies.

The media also influences the public's opinion of people on trial. Even before being found guilty, a lot of suspects in high profile cases are advertised as killers and that makes it hard to find jurors who will determine their verdict from the trial alone, and not what they have heard in pre-trial publicity.

← Student discusses the media's influence on public opinion and explains how Americans' thinking is shaped by what they hear and see.

← Student discusses positive impacts of the media on public opinion (i.e., positive public service messages).

← Student discusses negative impacts of the media on public opinion. Examples reflect how the media can adversely affect young people and defendants in high profile legal cases.

← Overall, the student demonstrates a thorough understanding of the ways that social institutions influence behavior. Specifically, the student demonstrates a clear understanding of the impact of the media on individuals and society.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 8 Social Studies

Sample 3-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

In today's society more Americans own televisions than toilets. A single American watches over 18 hours of television a week. The average student spends more time in front of a television set than in the classroom.

The mass media have a very large influence on public opinion. For example, a positive way the media influence opinion is by covering both sides of a story.

However, negatively, the mass media have the power to reflect on issues as good or bad, and if you're in disagreement with them, then this is a negative for you. Also, the media have the power to control what they cover. So depending on the issue, this can be either a positive or negative.

No matter how you look at it, the mass media have a large impact on public opinion.

← Student uses relevant facts and figures to discuss the impact of the mass media on American society.

← Student discusses one positive way in which the media may influence public opinion (i.e., covering both sides of a story). The importance of this example is not clearly developed.

← Student discusses one negative aspect of the media on the public (i.e., the media control what they cover). While the example is relevant, its impact on public opinion is implied rather than discussed.

Overall, the student demonstrates a general understanding of the ways that social institutions influence behavior. Specifically, the student demonstrates a general understanding of the impact of the media on individuals and society.



ANNOTATED STUDENT RESPONSE

Grade 8 Social Studies

Sample 2-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

The media, through television, radio, newspapers, and other avenues, influence public opinion in America. In some cases it's helpful, but in other cases it's harmful.

The news usually gets the facts out, which is helpful in the forming of opinions. The National Inquirer is usually full of lies, which can ruin a person's image, and make people look at them badly.

← Student's first paragraph merely restates the information provided in the question.

← Student's discussion of positive and negative impacts of the media on public opinion (i.e., providing facts and damaging personal reputations) is relevant but limited.

Overall, the student demonstrates a limited understanding of the impact of the media on individuals and society.

Sample 1-Point Response of Student Work

Student Response

The negative thing about movies is they give people ideas about things. They can change people's attitudes as a positive thing and give people good ideas.

← Student minimally identifies negative and positive impacts of the media (i.e., give people ideas about things and change attitudes) but offers no discussion.

Overall, the student demonstrates a minimal understanding of the impact of the media on individuals and society.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Grade 8 Social Studies

The open response item “**Mass Media**” was designed to assess student’s (1) ability to observe, analyze, and interpret human behaviors, and (2) awareness and understanding of how social institutions—in this case the media—respond to human needs, structure society, and influence behavior. The instructional strategies below present ideas for helping students to explore and master these concepts.

- Discuss the meaning of “mass media” and how various media affect our daily lives.
- Invite representatives from local media outlets to the class to discuss what they do and how their work impacts the community.

Have students work individually, in pairs, in small groups, and/or as a class to complete any or all of the following activities:

- Conduct a classroom or school survey to determine how much time students spend watching, listening to, or reading various mass media each week. With which media do they spend the most time? Rely on for news and information? Turn to for entertainment?
- Conduct research on the issue of violence in the media and its impact on children and their behavior.
- Identify a major news story and look at how it is covered by newspapers, newsmagazines, television, radio, and on the Internet. Compare how each medium deals with the same story in terms of coverage, perspective, and impact.
- Tape television and/or radio commercials to analyze in class. What is the advertiser trying to say? How is this message communicated? Is the commercial effective?
- Organize a “Turn Off the TV” week with the class or school. At the end of the week, discuss how life was different without this medium in students’ lives.
- Find articles and information on the future of the mass media. Discuss the changes students are likely to see in their lifetime. Use this information to write a scenario showing how the mass media may affect our lives 20 years from now.